

critical digest

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New York Theatre Diary

Bullfight-Theatre de Lys- 1/12/54 . Modern American Theater presents a new play by Leslie Stevens . Directed by Joseph Anthony, cast includes Hurd Hatfield, Tamara Daykarhanova, Mario Alcalde and Milton Seltzer. Sloan Simpson is listed as "technical advisor" on bull-fight scenes...The Starcross Story-Royale 1/13/54 .The Shuberts, John C. Wilson and S.S. Krellberg present a new play by Diana Morgan about the exposure of a sports world figures infamous past. John C Wilson directed cast which includes Eva Le Gallienne, Mary Astor, Anthony Ross and Margaret Bannerman.

Current Theatre Reviews

Mademoiselle Colombe- Longacre 1/6/54. Majority of daily drama critics expressed disappointment at Jean Anouilh's new play adapted from the French by Time critic Louis Kronenberger. Chapman, News, was sole aisle-sitter to express outright enjoyment, though most praised the portrayals of Julie Harris, Eli Wallach and Edna Best in the Joseph-Julien production staged by Nation drama critic Harold Clurman. News reviewer rated it a mildly cynical, gently amusing and quite talkative little endorsement of sin which is given a stylish production. Rest of critics filed "con" votes. Atkinson, Times, feared play looked badly put together in styles that do not harmonize. Kerr, Herald Tribune, rated it a more bitter than bittersweet concoction. Coleman, Mirror, admired the cast but noted that the play never gripped his attention. Post observer believes play is dissatisfying due to a lack of sympathy for the young husband as presented by the author. McClain, Journal American, joined the majority because he thought the author failed to mould his components into anything satisfying. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, blamed the direction for setting the play at too hysterical a pitch.

His and Hers- 48th St 1/7/54. News reviewer filed sole "pro" notice for Fay and Michael Kanin's new comedy about 2 married playwrights, played by Celeste Holm and Robert Preston. Critic noted comedy's nice warmth, reasonableness, and its ability to get off a funny remark now and then. Rest of daily reviewers panned Albert Selden-Morton Gottlieb production. Script took the major blame, most feeling it was second rate and unfunny. Atkinson, Times, billed it as the epitome of mediocrity. Kerr, Herald Tribune, noted it is casual in its construction, gentle in its intramural jokes, and almost studiously unhilarious. Pedestrian work, tabbed Coleman, Mirror, who wished Mrs Kanin, the author of Goodbye My Fancy better luck next. Feeble comedy is how Watts, Post, summed it up. While Hawkins, WT&S, settled for a faint fizzle of gaiety. Oleg Cassini rated approval of most for costumes he designed for Miss Holm.

Pro "Head-Shrinkers"

Admitting he is one of the few persons in his little world who has never been "in analysis", Gibbs, New Yorker, found he enjoyed Oh Men! Oh Women! Weekly reviewer noted that his reaction wasn't perhaps quite as rapturous as the rest of the first night audience, which as usual, contained most of the more advanced mental cases in town. Critic also noted that many believe he don't need a "head-shrinker" is because the opportunities for self revelation in print are so vast that the confessional couch would be superfluous.

' Village Theatre '

Lisa Stratter, a modern version of Aristophanes Lysistrata by Andrew Boracci with the scene set in the UN is being presented at Provincetown Playhouse, 183 MacDougal...The Madwoman of Chaillot will be revived Jan 12 by Actors Mobile Theatre at 430 6th Ave with performances MON through THUR with a matinee on SUN.

Fire Exit, a new play by V R Lang, will be presented Jan 26-28 by Artists Theatre at Amato Theatre, 159 Bleecker. Only Your Happiness, a new play by Ilya Motyleff is being presented week-ends at Dramatic Workshop, 1619 Broadway.

The Climate of Eden and The Emperor's Clothes productions were enjoyed by Sheaffer, Eagle. Critic was surprised how well Current Stages production of the first named manages on its small stage. Eva Stern was highly praised. While at the second critic thought production and script seemed better than Broadway try.

' Off Broadway '

Equity Community Theatre winter program will include Detective Story, The Corn is Green, The Hasty Heart and Kiss Me Kate. Performances will be held at De Witt Clinton High School, Bryant High School,...The Year Round, the revue with an all Negro cast which was presented in Harlem last spring, will be produced on Broadway by Jimmy Diaz and Larry Robinson...Maurice Schwartz' Let's Change Places, scheduled for the President Jan 14, has been postponed at least 2 weeks. ...Arthur Miller will read from his plays Jan 13 at YMHA Poetry Center, 96th & Lex.

' Vaudeville '

New Palace show features Lee Davis, 3 Swifts, Fred Lowery, Vince & Gloria Haydock, Stuart Allan, Channing Pollock, and the Mansfields.

' Broadway TV Theatre '

Room Service, the 1937 farce by John P. Murray and Allen Boretz, will be presented on WOR TV Broadway TV Theatre Jan 11-15 with Lew Parker. Farce opened at Cort on May 19, 1937 and played 500 performances. Staged by George Abbott the original cast included Sam Levine, Teddy Hart, Eddie Albert, Donald McBride and Phillip Loeb. Unanimous cheers were recorded by the NY daily reviewers. Inspired foolishness, rated Atkinson. Rip roaring farce, noted Coleman, Mirror. Glib, uproarious, delightfully crack brained show, added Brown, Post. Most agreed a large measure of credit was due the direction of Abbott. A revival of farce on April 6, 1953 at Playhouse, presented by Bernard Hart and Don Hershey lasted only 16 performances.

' Theatre TV Comments '

"The Backbone of America", Robert E. Sherwood's first original teleplay for NBC TV won a split decision from NY daily TV critics. O'Nrian, Journal American, praised the playwright for his admirable level of dramatic sense and understanding of the TV medium. But Gould, Times, and Van Horne, World Telegram & Sun, found it very disappointing. Former noted Sherwood let the idea slip through his hands. Play lacked a real point of view, he commented. Latter critic fears playwright lowered his sights in writing for the new medium.

' Theatre Book Comments '

"Curtain Time" by Lloyd Morris (Random House) rated as a historical but not very serious minded survey by New Yorker. Result of over packing of characters is 4 or 5 books in one.

"Theatre in the Fifties" by George Jean Nathan (Knopf) won 3 cheers from Van Druten, Saturday Review. Playwright admits he and critic seem to dislike the same kind of deadwood and underbrush in the theatre.

 ! Green Room Department !

MORE SHUBERT OBITS... Mister Lee was the last of the "legends" of US theatre producers, commented Chapman, News. When Lee Shubert spoke on the record, the critic recalls, he gave a direct answer to a direct question, the only man Chapman ever dealt with who did. The critic will miss him and so will the American stage... Coleman, Mirror, recalled the humor and friendliness of Mister Lee, who often gave the reviewer a ride back to NYC from a summer theatre.

"DEAD" QUOTE AD... Broadway wonders how the display ad lines for Dead Pidgeon labeled "Too Passionate For Kerr" and "Too Obvious for Atkinson" seemed to the respective critics, noted Winchell. Quote from Kerr read "The junior detective and his brassy doll embrace passionately more times than I could count." while the quote from Atkinson read "Isolate an attractive young blonde in a hotel room with a handsome cop; and you know what to expect."

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... The motor court should provide excellent material for a US comedy, suggests Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun... End As A Man would be a better play and a more popular one if it had abandoned its on-stage dirty cussing which is thrown in for realism, predicts Chapman, News... Reviewers should be grateful to Sing Till Tomorrow for giving them a chance to get so much venom out of their systems, sighs Watts, Post.

CHORUS FUND PLEA... American Theatre Wing director Louis Simon has setup a plan for an Chorus Equity Scholarship at the Wing allowing a full year of training for an unknown youngster now singing or dancing in a current show. Burr, Playbill, urges theatre fans to contribute to the \$15,000 needed. Checks should be made to American Theatre Wing, 351 West 48.

COLUMN TIPS... Eartha Kitt earns 20% of gross from touring New Faces, reports Walker. New Broadway producer was warned to alter his audition methods of actresses or face trouble from Equity, hears Kilgallen... Christine Jorgensen may play in a revival of Anna Christie, repeats Gardner.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... His and Hers tried out in Pittsburgh and Detroit instead of Philadelphia and Boston because latter are an unnecessary rut, producer Morton Gottlieb told Rice, Post. Pittsburgh is a comfortable place to go, added co-producer Albert Selden. It doesn't have the camp followers leaning over your shoulders giving advice.

 ! Pros & Cons by TMK !

 ! "Gift" Coupon !

Broadway's loss of the Avon and Vanderbilt Theatres, both seating less than 800, is another good reason for the construction of new legit theatres. It is now about a year after the NY City Council changed its building codes to allow combination theatres and business or apartment buildings. Except for some bright promises and press releases nothing has been done about the building of new theatres. Unless theatre fans become vocal and verbal about the uncomfortable NYC playhouses they will have to suffer with them for many years to come.

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 for of "CD" quotes reviews.

A parking lot and a garage are scheduled to replace two legitimate theatres which have been used in recent years for radio and television shows. The Avon, an intimate 740 seat house on West 45th St which was built in 1920 as the "Marc Klaw," is being torn down. The land will temporarily be used as a parking lot. The Vanderbilt, an equally small house on West 49th St which was built in 1918, will probably be torn down to make way for a 6 story parking garage. Though the Avon was offered for theatre bookings this year, none materialized. The Vanderbilt played host to Anna Russell's Little Show, End As A Man and finally to the show with the apt title of Dead Pidgeon.

Plays

Madam Will You Walk and Dead Pidgeon closed...Dial M For Murder moved to Booth. ...\$3500 was collected at NY theatres during Actors Fund Week...Jan 11 Drama Desk meeting switched to Jan 18...Sabrina Fair will present 3 performances Sat, Feb 20 including a midnight show for Equity Welfare Fund...Abracadabra is title of play by Hermione Gingold, Almanac.

People

Daniel Mann has replaced Herman Shumlin as director of The Immoralist...Jean Dalrymple has been named permanent director of the NYC Theatre Company...Jose Ferrer received the NYC Certificate of Merit from Mayor Wagner at a City Hall ceremony.

Other Broadways

London cast member of Wish You Were Here almost drowned in the on-stage swimming pool when he hit his head on the bottom. 2 actors dived in to pull him out...My 3 Angels tour opens in Wilmington, Feb 4...Capitol Theatre in St. Petersburg, Fla, opens a 10 week season of winter stock with The Moon is Blue starring Donald Cook, Janet Riley and Dean Harens...Dear Charles closed in Washington "for repairs"...World of Sholom Aleichem Chicago company opens Feb 13 at the Eleventh St. Theatre.

Theatre TV Notes

Ginger Rogers will star in a TV film series which will feature plays and casts of the nation's 1800 Little Theatre groups. The CBS TV production will fly the members of the cast to Hollywood where they will make films of their productions with Miss Rogers as star.

Theatre Film Notes

Carmen Jones will be filmed in CinemaScope by 20th Century Fox..."The Life Story of George M Cohan" will star Mickey Rooney and Jan Clayton.

CRITICAL DIGEST
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